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ABSTRACT

Intended to encourage geography curriculum development and research, the German Geography Curriculum Research Project (RCFP) is sponsored by the Association of German Geographers and administered by eight project groups and six associated project groups throughout Germany. It is similar to the American High School Geography Project (HSGP), upon which it is modeled. However, the RCFP differs from HSGP in several ways. For example, whereas the main objective of the HSGP was to construct a complete geography curriculum for high school students, the RCFP's objective is to create a nucleus for further curriculum development and research. Thirty two units are planned for the RCFP, most of which are intended for use in grades seven through 12. Of the 19 units which have been completed, three have been evaluated. Topics include urban geography, site analysis, planning in coastal regions, regional and city planning, environmental study, migrant workers, and problems of developing countries. Each unit consists of student handouts, instructional materials, and a teaching guide which includes background information, objectives, an overview of the unit, procedure, bibliography, and resources. Findings from preliminary evaluation by teachers and students indicate that the units are somewhat more interesting and relevant than traditional geography units. A bibliography concludes the document. (Author/DB)

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The German High School Geography Project (RCFP)

by Günter Niemz

(Paper given at the National Convention of the Association of American Geographers at New Orleans in April 1978)

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The German High School Geography Project (RCFP)

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Ladies and Gentlemen:

During the short time available for the presentation of each paper at this convention nobody will expect a detailed analysis and discussion of each single topic. All I can do is to inform you briefly about the German HSGP, and I'll gladly answer any additional questions you might have afterwards. I myself am most interested in hearing about your experience with the HSGP, its result and success, and in a discussion of matters of mutual interest.

As you can see in the abstract the correct title of our German project is "Raumwissenschaftliches Curriculum-Forschungsprojekt (RCFP)". Translated into English it would be something like Geographic Curriculum Research Project. But to make quite clear what I was going to talk about I chose the title "German HSGP".

As mentioned in the abstract there are quite a few similarities and also differences between your HSGP and our RCFP. The similarities are mainly due to the fact that your HSGP served as a model for our RCFP, whereas the differences are caused by a somewhat different purpose of our RCFP and the different position of geography in schools in our country.

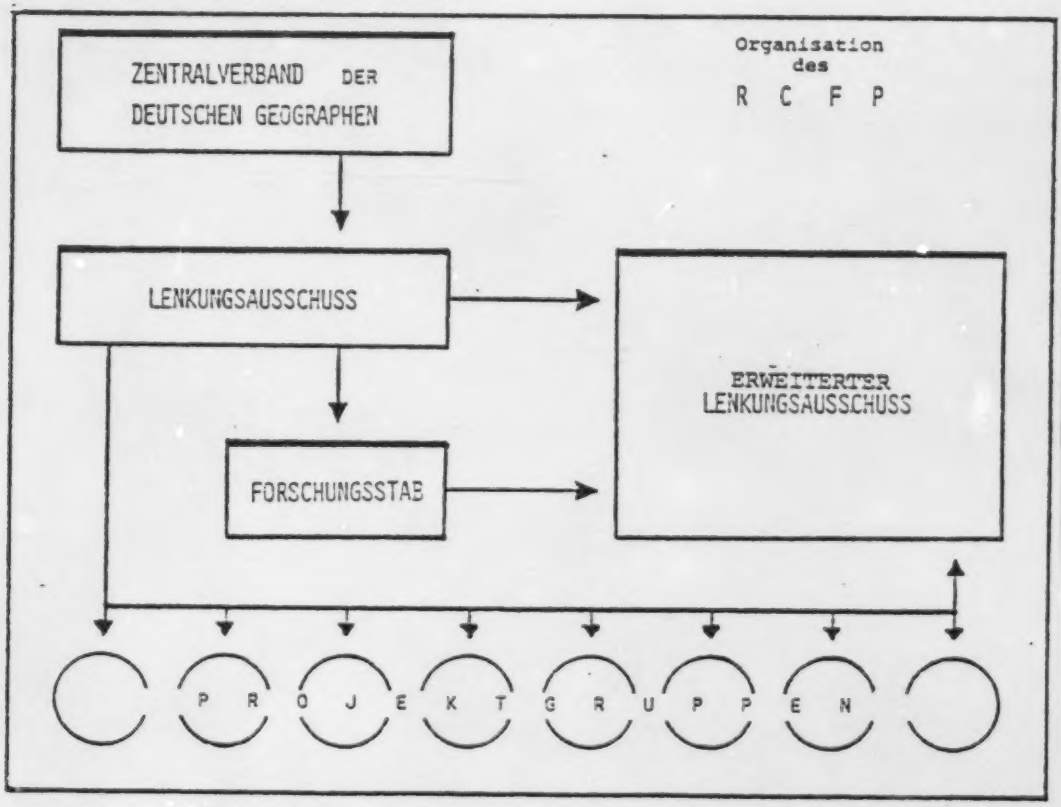
Your goal was to construct a complete geographic curriculum or course for one particular age group. Our RCFP has two main purposes:

1. It is intended to be an innovative nucleus for the construction of new geographic curricula.
2. It is supposed to promote didactic research in geographic education.

The organization of the RCFP, sponsored by the Association of German Geographers, is basically the same as that of the HSGP. Our Lenkungsausschuß, consisting of seven members, was formed after your steering committee, our Forschungsstab corresponds to your project staff. There are only three people in the Forschungsstab compared with your 19 to 24 members. The

chair persons of the different project groups together with the steering committee and the project staff form the enlarged steering committee, which had to decide all major questions like admission of new project groups, hiring of staff members, finances, acceptance of teaching units for evaluation etc.

I : Organization of the RCFP


ZENTRALVERBAND DER DEUTSCHEN GEOGRAPHEN
Organisation des R C F P
LENKUNGSAUSSCHUSS
ERWEITERTER LENKUNGSAUSSCHUSS
FORSCHUNGSSTAB
P R O J E K T G R U P P E N

Source: RCFP Lenkungsausschuß Das Raumwissenschaftliche Curriculum-Forschungsprojekt. Erfahrungen und Ergebnisse der Entwicklungsphase 1973-1976. München 1977, page 14

The eight project groups and the six associated project groups are scattered all over the Federal Republic of Germany and centered at the location of universities. Most project groups consist of teachers and university geographers, mainly those specializing or interested in Didactics of Geography. The associated project groups were admitted after the main groups had been formed between 1972 and 1974, and profited from the experience and advice of the staff, steering committee and

II: Project groups of the RCFP

Source: RCFP Lenkungsausschuß Das Raumwissenschaftliche Curriculum-Forschungsprojekt. Erfahrungen und Ergebnisse der Entwicklungsphase 1973-1976. München 1977. page 99

the main project groups. But they could get very little financial support only because of lack of funds. As you can see in your abstract there were only 900 000.- DM of federal money available, that is about 400 000 dollars, very little compared with the 2.5 million dollars for the HSGP. The different German states contributed another 900 000.- DM in working hours of university faculty. This was regarded as part of our research work, which, however, we do anyway.

To serve the two purposes of our RCFP 32 teaching units were planned. They are constructed for different grades, from pre-school to grade 13. Most of them, however, refer to what you would call high school, the grades 7 to 12. The main teaching objective is the ability to critically participate in planning as citizens. The topics vary widely:

Urban Geography (residential districts, migration in urbanized areas, urban recreational activities, urban and village renewal).

Location analyses for airports, playgrounds, schools, fire stations, indoor swimming pools etc.

Planning in coastal regions (resort areas, harbors, problem areas).

Environmental studies (soil erosion and conservation, water usage and pollution).

Integration of minorities (migrant workers and their families).

Aspects of developing countries in Africa and South America etc.

These topics were mainly suggested by the project groups and accepted by the enlarged steering committee because of their didactic relevance, some with alterations. The majority of the problems dealt with in these units are located in Germany, some abroad, but they are basically transferable to other areas as well.

Each unit consists of

- a teacher manual,
- teaching materials that can be re-used like maps, slides, films, transparencies, tapes etc. and
- student materials.

III: Teaching units of the RCFP

\+ = related themes

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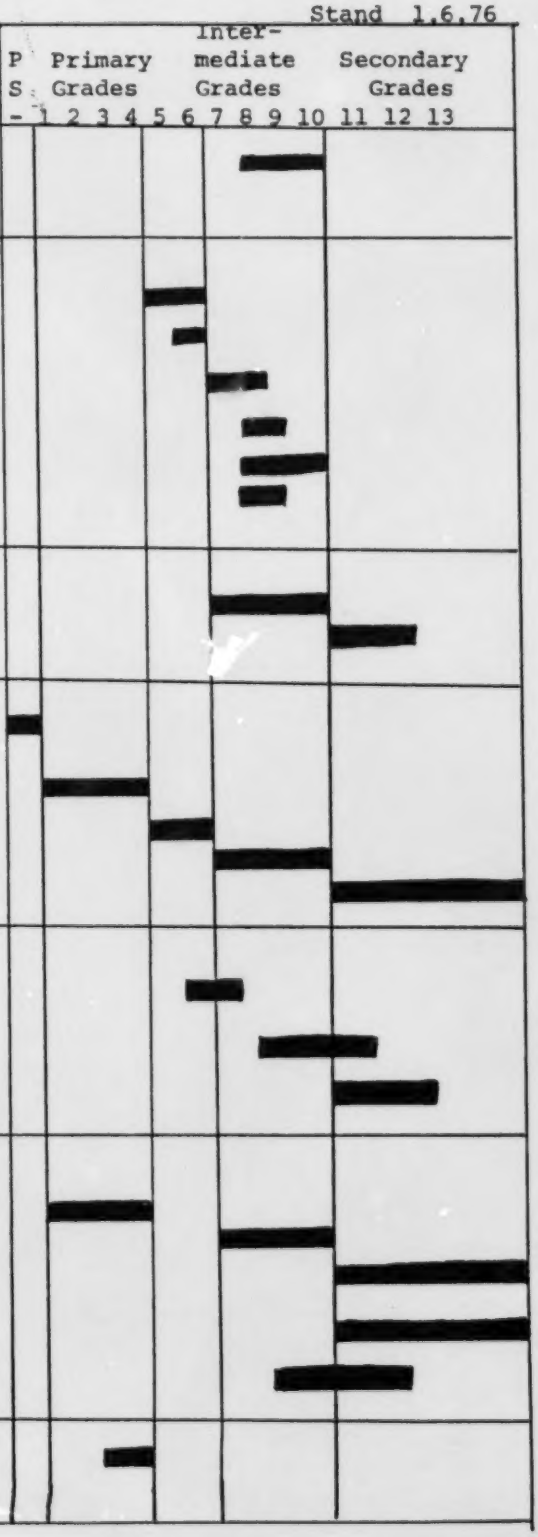
PROJECT GROUP	Themes of the RCFP-- Instructional Units
BONN	Problems of finding housing and changing one's dwelling in an urban area
BREMEN	Development Problems of Third World Countries 1. Introduction to Development Theory 2. Drought in the Sahel 3. Colonialsim and Independence in Nigeria 4. Social Change in Peru 5. Tina Jones 6. Tunisia: Nomads + Development
FRANKFURT	Conservation + Development 1. Introductory 2. Advanced
FREIBURG	Environment - Water 1. First encounters with water 2. Water pollution and conservation 3. Case study--Oasis 4. The Rhine River 5. The Volta River
HAMBURG	Development of Coastal Areas 1. Geltinger Bay should be protected 2. Industrial planning in the lower Elbe region 3. Mezzogiorno
KARLSRUHE	Search for the best development site 1. Recreational planning 2. A fire in Tannenweiler 3. Indoor baths in forest regions 4. Blankenheim should become incorporated. 5. Should Stadthagen grow?
MANNHEIM/ GÖTTINGEN	Integration of marginal social groups such as foreign workers



III: Teaching units of the RCFP (continued)

MÜNICH	Traffic Engineering Problems 1. Excessive wind at the airport 2. Traffic and commerce problems in various geographical areas					
+MÜNICH	Problems Related to Educating children of foreign workers in a large city					
+WÜRZBURG/ HEIDELBERG	Village Renovation					
+ERLANGEN/ NURNBERG	Influence of local history on effective decision-making					
+DORTMUND	Riemke needs a schoolhouse					
+MÜNSTER	Suburban Improvement					
+GIESSEN	City Improvement					

Source: RCFP Guide. Experience and Conclusions of the Developmental phase, 1973-76. Münich 1977, page 104.

On an average the units are planned for about ten hours of 45 minutes each. They consist of integral and optional parts.

Each teacher manual contains
- geographic information on and didactic justification of the topic,
- teaching objectives,
- a survey of the whole unit,
- detailed descriptions of the different steps or lessons,
- suggestions for courses and grades, in which the unit can be used,
- bibliography,
- sources and copies of all materials.

The compilation of each unit included the following phases:
- Planning (6-15 months)
- concept production (6-15 months)
- local testing in schools (1-3 months)
- modification (6-12 months)
- editing (5-12 months)
- central testing and evaluation (10-14 months)
- revision (6-9 months)
- publication (6-9 months).

So far 19 teaching units have been compiled. Three units have been centrally evaluated, the one on the location of the second airport of Munich was revised and published in November 1977, whereas the other two are being revised and prepared for publication right now. Four units are in the central evaluation, two are being prepared for it. Three units are being tested in different regions, and seven are getting the last touch for regional evaluation.

To evaluate the first unit two questionaires for teachers, two for students and one student achievement test were used. On the whole, the results are good. However, they cannot be generalized, because the 32 teachers testing this unit were volunteers, particularly interested in geography and especially in modern geographic approaches. Therefore, it can be expected that their instruction is interesting and their students are motivated. The differences in the students' opinions about their normal geographic instruction and the teaching of the RCFP are not big (mainly in the categories relevant - irrelevant, provable - unprovable, modern - old fashioned, easy - difficult, dry -

humorous). In the achievement test the average percentage of correct answers was 66%, which may be regarded as a fair result. But again, it cannot be generalized, as 60% of the students were college bound. The figures for the results in different types of schools were not published, but I do know from other tests, which I constructed for a new geographic curriculum, how big the differences can be, particularly when the subject matter is difficult.
Conclusions drawn from this particular evaluation were given to the project group and led to a revision of the unit.
The different units can be bought separately through Georg Westermann Verlag, 3300 Braunschweig, or Ernst Klett Verlag, 7000 Stuttgart. This arrangement enables the schools to pick out the units they are most interested in. Additional information can be obtained from the RCFP Forschungsstab, Linprunstraße 7, 8000 München 2 .
It is still too early to decide how successful the RCFP will be. But we do hope that this innovation, which itself was influenced by various factors, will help to create and implement new geographic curricula, to introduce new approaches in geographic instruction, to improve the qualifications of teachers, to motivate the students, and to promote research in geographic education.

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